***Writing in Context: Sample essay- anecdotal***

**Text: Carson McCullers - *The Member of the Wedding***

**Prompt:**

***"We cannot achieve a strong sense of identity unless we also have a strong sense of belonging to something other than ourselves."***

(Note – informal tone, colloquial language, subjective language [I, me, my, we, us, our] and contractions are ok in a personal anecdote)

*Introductory paragraph/section*

As an adolescent I struggled to cope with my early experiences at high school. At primary school life seemed easy; the teachers were pleasant, the work not difficult and I had many friends I'd grown up alongside to play and "hang out" with. During the Christmas break, at the end of sixth grade and looking forward to starting at the local high school with my three best friends, my world suddenly fell apart. My father was transferred from the peaceful, easy-going, country town of Castlemaine, to the fast paced, noisy, alien, suburban environment of Sunshine. I was enrolled at Sunshine High School. Everything I had known, almost everything and everyone I felt comfortable with, was obliterated. I was no longer the best at maths in the grade. I was no longer the only boy on the basketball team who'd shot a goal from the half court line. I couldn't hang out with my friends anymore and no one at my new school even knew my name. I felt totally lost and alone. The only constant in my life was my family. They were my rock. It was to them that I would return after each lonely day at school. It was them who would comfort and love me. It was them who would reassure me of who I was and where I belonged ***(context).*** Desmond Tutu once said that families, “ … are God's gift to you, as you are to them.” If it hadn't been for the sense of belonging, that secure relationship (dictionary.com) that my family gave to me, I don't know how I would have coped.

Life, in general, is very much like my personal anecdote. Our identities are shaped strongly by those around us who love us and the groups to which we feel that we belong. When we have a strong sense of belonging to something other than ourselves, this is when we can also achieve a strong sense of our identity; a sense of self that provides sameness and continuity in personality over time (dictionary.com) ***(prompt/definition).*** This sense of identity and belonging is explored in the text, *The Member of the Wedding* by Carson McCullers ***(text).*** Many of the issues and emotions explored in this text are similar to some of my own personal experiences.

*Body paragraph/section: TEEL structure (although it may be a little out of order)*

*Body paragraph/section 1*

As I mentioned, in my personal anecdote, at primary school ***(link)*** I felt safe, secure and as though I belonged ***(topic sentence).*** I had many friends, most of whom I had grown up with. Some of them I had known since kindergarten. We were in the same grade, we played in the same sport's teams, we joined the same clubs and we spent most weekends together. We found strength, safety and comfort in each other's company. As a group we belonged together ***(context).***

Frankie, in *The Member of the Wedding*, could not lay claim to this security of belonging to a group of friends who offered her the support and nurturing that she, so desperately, craved ***(topic sentence).*** Although Berenice and John Henry are more of a family to her than her “distant” father and her older brother, Jarvis, and his fiancée, Janice, they can offer her little in the way of understanding the transition she is experiencing. Frankie is in limbo, caught between childhood and adulthood, and not belonging anywhere or to anyone. When she finally arrives at the realisation that everyone, except her, “belongs” with someone else, she is desolate, until she decides that Jarvis and Janice are the ones to whom she should belong because, “They are the we of me” (McCullers, 2008, p.53). Finally, Frankie finds meaning; she finds someone to belong with; something to be a member of. Unlike Frankie, in my difficult time of transition, I was surrounded by a family who loved and "completed" me. They always offered me a sense of belonging and knowledge of who I was ***(prompt/link to next paragraph).***

*Body paragraph/section 2*

Whilst my primary school years were carefree and happy ***(link),*** my transition to high school was hell ***(topic sentence).*** My father's transfer to Sunshine, in the western suburbs of Melbourne, uprooted my complete sense of who I was, outside of my family. In Castlemaine I had been, almost, a local hero. I was great at sport, especially basketball, and the only player to have ever shot a basket from the half court line. I was first in my grade at maths, as well as being excellent in all my other subjects. I was liked and respected by all of my teachers and peers. Everyone in the school knew who I was. I could wander down the main street of Castlemaine and know almost every person I passed. I had purpose. I had meaning. I belonged ***(context).***

My first day at Sunshine High School abruptly wiped all of this from existence. Suddenly, I was a nobody; the lowest of the low. No one knew my name. All the other kids in year 7 had friends or peers from their primary schools to band together with and they ignored me. The kids in the higher grades gawked at, and harassed, the new year 7 kids; we were at the lowest end of the "pecking order" and I, being perceived as a "loner", with no one for support or protection, seemed to cop it the worst. In class no one sat with me. At recess and lunch no one sat with me or spoke to me. It was the longest and most miserable day of my life ***(context/explanation)***. I can easily imagine that this is how Frankie, in McCullers' *The* *Member of the Wedding* felt. She believed that, somehow, she had lost her sense of identity completely: "This was the summer when for a long time she had not been a member. She belonged to no club and was a member of nothing in the world. Frankie had become an unjoined person who hung around in doorways, and she was afraid" (McCullers, 2008, p.7) ***(examples/text).*** Frankie desperately wanted to belong somewhere and with someone and, without a close, loving and supportive family to help her through her crisis of identity, she fixated all her hope and longing upon the marriage of her brother and the, misguided, assumption that she would not only be a member of the wedding, but also a member of their lives after the wedding: " ‘I'm going with them ... I love the two of them so much. We'll go everyplace together. It's like I've known it all my life, that I belong to be with them ...’ At last she knew just who she was and understood where she was going. She loved her brother and the bride and she was a member of the wedding. The three of them would go into the world and they would always be together. And, finally, after the scared spring and the crazy summer, she was no more afraid" (McCullers, 2008, pp. 56-57) ***(examples/text)***. This revelation permeated her with such a strong sense of belonging and identity that she was almost overcome. She believed that her sense of identity was dependent upon belonging to something, or someone, other than herself ***(prompt).*** Ultimately, this belief is proven to be totally irrational and Frankie is left, a shattered shell, as Jarvis and Janice leave, without her, for their honeymoon ***(examples/explanation).***

*Conclusion*

McCullers explored, in her text ***(text)***, how individuals develop a sense of identity and belonging. The protagonist of *The Member of the Wedding*, Frankie, struggles to discover how she belongs and believes she has found her identity as a member of the wedding. My own strong sense of belonging to my family enabled me to also develop a strong sense of identity ***(Prompt)***. Without this, my desperate struggle to discover where, and how, I belonged in my new environment at high school would have been totally intolerable ***(context).***

1,379 words